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HOW TO PLAN



THE GAME



OF SO

SKAT



BY THE MAJOR



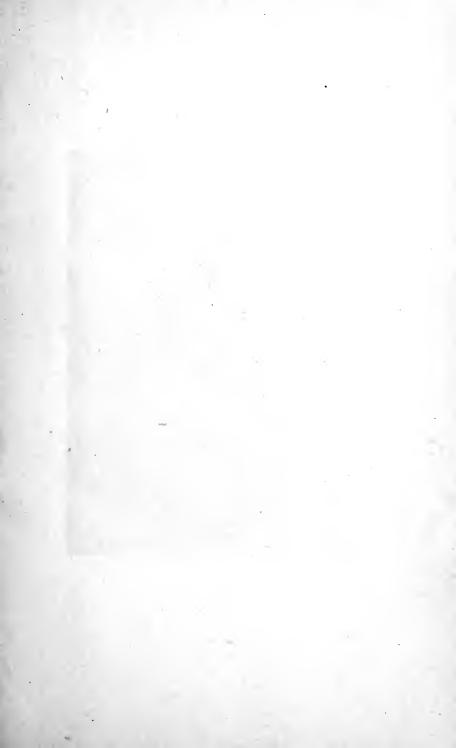


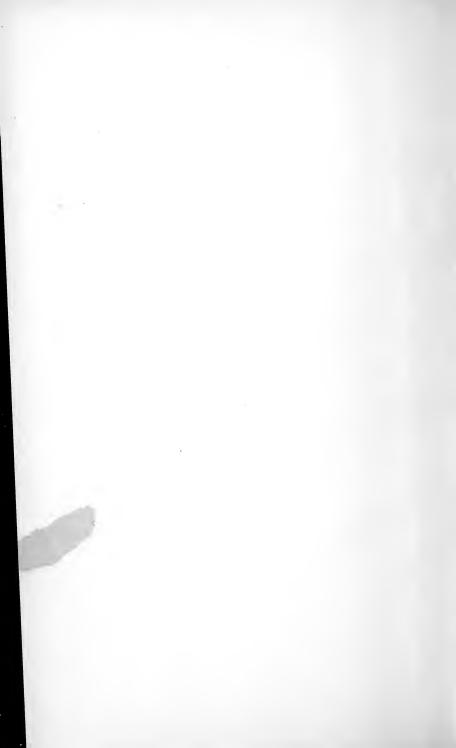
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15-6

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CONTENTS

~			Page.
Introductory,		•	်
Advice,	,		. 29
Dealing,		-	10
Following Suit,			. 15
From the Lowest to the Highest Game,			20
Grando,			. 22
Grando with the Knaves,			24
Hints as to the proper playing of Skat, .			. 28
Matadors,			18
Nullo,			. 22
Nullo Ouvert,			22
Penalties,			. 17
Philosophy of the Count,			26
Playing the Game,			. 16
Plays,			24
Points—Games,			. 13
Progression of the Game.			19

											Pa	ige.
Recapitulation,												23
Schneider and Schw	vart	z,				, 0					-	24
Solo,												21
Suits and Values,			-					_ •	4	•		12
Table of Values,			٠.							-3		31
The Skat, .												12
To Call a Game,											c	26
To Lay Down, .						_ •				4		26
Tourné, .												21
Trumps—Matadors,	,	c		-,		,		,				9
Value of the Cards	in S	Suit	s, T	'run	$_{ m ps}$	and	. M:	atad	ors,			9
When there is no ca	all,	Rai	nps									25

HOW TO_PLAY SKAT.

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS.

In the pronunciation of Skat, following the German spelling, there will probably arise an inclination to make the "a" in the word short, whereas it is long, like the "a" in "Father."

The derivation of the term Skat is difficult to determine. In its present form (as played to day) it is about fifteen years old, though the basis of the game is very much older. There are many games of cards where the points are counted as in Skat, and as many others where the Knaves play important parts.

There are technical terms special to every game, which are part and parcel of it, and these exist in Skat. Such particular names had better be retained as far as is possible, but the German names of the cards themselves, we insist should have their English designation allotted to them, otherwise confusion would follow.

In German the Knaves are called "Bauern," or "Jungen," sometimes "Wenzel," as in French they are known as "Valets." As the Knaves play a most important part in game of Skat, we will use the English name for them.

Somewhat of a more difficult task arises if an endeavor were made to anglicise certain terms used in the game, which are the verbs.

In Skat, just as there is in Boston, there exists the faintest element of bluff. A player wishing to play a certain kind of game announces his intention of so doing, and an opponent can declare a better game. In German this is called *gereizt*. As we have a synonymous term in Poker we will designate "gereitzen" as "calling," or "declaring." As an example of this a player may "call" or "declare" a game in diamonds, and another a game in hearts, then as a game in hearts is better than one in diamonds, the one having the game in hearts has "the call," and plays. These terms "calls" and "declaration" are both used in Boston.

Failure to do something proposed in Boston brings with it its penalties, so in Skat then, if a player does not make the game he has called, through bad cards or want of skill, he has to pay a certain number of chips for his failure.

Formerly when Whist was played with ten points,

if a game was scored and won by one side, before the other had made a single point, the winners were paid three times (a Triple) or four times (a Quadruple) whatever the stake might have been. If ten points were scored by partners before five was made by their adversaries, a Double was won.

In Skat there are increasing penalties for non performances governed by the points, as there are increased gains for scoring more than the stipulated points.

It may have been already seen that between Skat and Boston there are certain faint resemblances. I fact the general card-player soon becomes aware that there can be no game which is essentially original of its kind. Still in Skat there are many novel features, and for this reason it is particularly interesting.

Such acquaintance then with other games is of assistance to the beginner in Skat, but only up to a certain point.

We are rather inclined to the belief that the difficulty which has arisen so far in acquiring Skat, by means of books, is due to the fact that their authors have insisted too much on the resemblance between Skat and other games. If the same basic laws exist in all games, the rules of cards in Skat and which govern it, whether arbitrary or not, make it an exceptional game. The player then, who wants to learn Skat, must, in a measure, make up his mind that he is acquiring an entirely new game.

Skat is a game into which the elements of skill enters very largely, and though there may be thousands of players, there are but few who are good performers.

This element of skill, which, like Whist, will give the percentage of games to the greatest ability, is, however, more subservient to chance in Skat than in Whist, and this is exactly why Skat is so pleasing.

The unknown quantity is always present, and may overturn the best laid plans, and per contra, what may have seemed a hazardous or reckless "declaration" may be crowned with success.

Skat is a game of combinations, and by that it means that there are several different games incorporated in it, depending of course on the hands. In this respect it resembles Boston. In Boston there is the Little Misery, and Little Misery on the table where no tricks are taken, and Boston, where all the tricks are taken, and nearly these same calls or declarations are to be found in Skat, although the values of the cards differ.

A Boston player will understand this at once, whereas a Whist player will not. Whist never changes its character or main features any more than does Magna Charta, and though methods of counting may differ, Charles Lamb might sit down to-day, were he alive, and play his rubber with Clay or Cavendish.

To use a Latin saying, we should advise any one who wants to learn Skat to make a *tabula rasa* of his mind, that is to rub off of his mental slate all that he thinks he knows about other games, and to begin afresh.

The true charm of any game, its perfect value, as a recreation, may be judged by the fact as to whether it can be played for the love of the thing. Whist, Euchre, Picket, Cribbage are of this character, and most essentially Skat. It can be played "for love," or for the very smallest stake, because of its inherent excellence.

Let no one believe that Skat cannot be learnt unless by seeing the actual game. The difficulties of acquiring Skat by books have been exaggerated, though somewhat due to the confused methods of explanation. Too much has been taken for granted.

VALUE OF CARDS IN SKAT.—SUITS.—TRUMPS.—MATADORS.—ETC., ETC., WITH THE EXCEPTIONS.

Skat is a game of three persons. Four persons may make up the party, but only three can play. When there is a fourth, the fourth deals; he is out of the game for the round.

Skat is played with 32 cards, with the four suits, all the cards below the Sevens being excluded, the same as in Euchre. Every game is closed when the ten cards in each hand are played.

Remembering that the game is one of combinations, there are not less than seven (7) different games in Skat, called the "Simple Game," "Tourné," "Solo," "Nullo," "Grando," "Nullo-Open," and "Grando-Open."

There is a family resemblance in the Simple game, Tourné, Solo and Grando, which, when once understood, makes an acquaintance with all of them easy.

The trouble in Skat, which must not be concealed, lies in the exceptions, and these will be fully explained. Such exceptional games arise only when a distinct call is made, the player stating that he intends to make a particular game. At once, when the statement is made, the other players know what is the new character of the game.

DEALING.

The cards must be shuffled, and the first Jack turned determines who shall be dealer. The first cards are given to the left. The player to the right cuts. An exposed card requires a new deal, but the deal does not pass, and the same rule holds in case of a mis-deal.

Each player receives ten cards in all, and there are two cards over, those two cards are known as the Skat.

The method of dealing is to give not more than five cards to each of the three players, and then to put two cards on the table face down, not exposing them, and next to give the other five cards to the players.

Three cards can be given to each player, then the Skat, which is the two cards put on the table, then four more cards to each person, and then three, making ten cards in all to each person.

After the first part of the dealing, for the ten cards are to be given, no matter how the cards are dealt, whether three or five, the Skat must then be put face down on the table. This rule is invariable.

Variations as to whether five cards, or two or three cards, shall be dealt at one time, are permissable, providing not less than two cards, but not more than five, are given at one time.

The order of proposing the game to be tried differs in Skat from all other games. The order is reversed. A deals to B and C. B is known as the first hand, C as the middle, and A as the last hand. A does not ask B what he will play, but A makes the inquiry of C who is to his right. A must have some play or he passes. Should he pass, then C asks B. In case all three have cards which they think can make a game,

the one who declares the highest uncertaking, the one incurring the greatest penalty, has the call. If two call the same game, the elder hand has it. The dealer always is the elder hand. If all three pass, and there is no call, there may be a new game dealt. In some cases, what is called Ramps is played, but Ramps does not belong to Skat.

We are now only on the threshold of Skat, and further explanations are in order.

THE SKAT.

In what are called the Simple game, Tourné and Solo, and in Grando, the Skat comes into play. Turned down on the table, it belongs to the player who makes or secures a call. The Skat cannot be looked at under all conditions. Sometimes it makes the trump, and sometimes the points in it are counted for the person who takes it. In certain games it does not figure at all, and remains untouched.

SUITS AND VALUES

In the Simple game, Tourné and Solo:

Clubs come Spades come second, Hearts come third, Diamonds come last. As the respective values of these suits must always be born in mind, an example of this can be readily furnished. A Simple game in diamonds gives place to a Simple game in hearts, hearts to spades, and spades to clubs. In Tourné the turning of one card makes the trump, the card being taken from the Skat, but the Knave of clubs, and the other Knaves in the order before mentioned, are always the best trumps, then comes the Ace, Ten, King, Queen, etc., of the trumps turned.

Say some player calls the Simple game, there are no contestants, no one had bid against him, or urged him up higher, then he plays the Simple game. But, as it often happens, some one has declared or called a higher game, as Tourné, then Tourné makes the play. When a play is left to one of the three, the other two become his adversaries. If A plays anything, B and C join together to defeat him, or if it is B who has a call, A and C are his opponents.

POINTS. -GAMES.

In the Simple game, in Tourné, in Solo and in Grando, Skat is a game of points, not of tricks. A, who makes a declare, might take eight tricks, lose two tricks and the game.

In the Simple game, in Tourné, Solo and Grando,

Sylpho

your declaration means that you will make sixty-one points, or more if you can. Failing to make the sixty-one points, scoring sixty points or less, you lose. We repeat purposely the names of these games in Skat, the Simple game, Tourné, Solo and Grando, so as to impress them on the reader's mind, for there are more of these games played than of the others. Nullo, and Grando ouvert, are exceptional calls.

We will now give the character of the points, which present no difficulties.

The Aces count the most, which is eleven. The Tens count ten, the Kings four, the Queens three, and Knaves two. The Nine, the Eight and Seven have no values.

Taking all the count cards, with the Tens, what are they worth?

Four Aces,	11	eac	$h \dots \dots$	44]	points,
Four Tens,	10	"		40	"
Four Kings,	4	"		16	"
Four Queens	s, 3	"	• • • • • • • •	12	"
Four Knaves	s, 2	"		8	"
The total	$_{ m beir}$	ıg.	1	20	"

The half 120 is 60. To make a Simple game, a Tourné, a Solo or a Grando, and win it, the player

must count in his tricks one (1) point more than sixty, or sixty-one. If he only makes sixty points he loses.

Trumps in the game of Skat have their peculiarites, but present no difficulties.

Remembering the values, first clubs, then spades, next hearts, and lastly diamonds, the Knave of clubs is the highest trump, no matter what color may have been made trumps; next is the Knave of spades, then the Knave of hearts, and lastly comes the Knave of diamonds. After the four Knaves, the Ace is the best card, then come the Ten, next King, Queen, Nine, Eight and Seven. As has before been remarked, the difficulty in Skat is in the exceptions, for in Grando it is only the four Knaves which are trumps, in the succession named. In Nullo there are no trumps at all.

FOLLOWING SUIT.

In playing, a lead calls for the same suit. You must follow suit. Just as in Whist, if you cannot follow suit you may trump if you wish to, or throw away any cards at your pleasure.

All the Knaves being trumps, if a heart Solo were declared, and the Knave of clubs were led, trumps must be furnished by the other players.

It is not to be expected that even an attentive reader or an expert card-player can at once seize the main features of the game, but as good a plan as any will be to present something like an actual game, which will explain the character of the Skat and its usages.

PLAYING A GAME.

A, B and C are the performers. A has dealt, and B declares a game, a Simple game in diamonds. There is no opposition, and B sets out to make the sixty-one points, diamonds being trumps. It is a low call, because a Simple game in hearts would have taken it away from him by another player, as would have done a call of spades or clubs.

B, from the fact of his calling, has the privilege of taking the Skat, which is the two cards not exposed. He does not show them. Just as in Picket, he incorporates the two cards in his hand, discarding or putting aside two other cards from his own hand, those which he thinks are of the smallest importance to him. It may happen that he holds two single Tens, or only one. He may discard his one, or two Tens, and stow them away, for whatever points there are in the Skat belong to him, and add to his count.

Suppose the player B was quite positive of making fifty-one points, and doubtful about one Ten he held. This Ten, if he could save it, would make him exactly what he wants, which is sixty-one points, and so he puts it away for safety in his discard.

B, the first player after the dealer, begins his lead. He may have the two best Knaves, Ace, Ten of trumps, the King of his trump suit, which is diamonds. The other trumps may be divided, and all fall to his lead. His opponents, A and C, who follow suit, are doing their best all the time to prevent him counting sixty-one points. When the ten cards in each hand are played out, the count of the cards taken begins. If B has sixty-one points in the cards he has secured, he wins. If he has sixty points he loses.

Beginners, before entering the higher realms of Skat, ought to familiarize themselves with this play, known as the Simple game, for it is the foundation on which Skat has been built. The somewhat confusing addition of three more trumps, viz: the Knaves, which makes a trump suit of eleven, can be understood. The Skat, and its importance, as giving the person who secures it a sight of twelve cards, is now appreciated.

PENALTIES.

The player, B, has won his Simple game with sixtyone points. He is paid for the call. There are certain
fixed charges which accompany all calls Say in this
instance a Simple game in diamonds was worth ten
chips. A pays B ten chips, as does C. If B had lost
he would have paid each of the other players ten, or
twenty chips. He may then win or lose twenty points.

B has started out to make his sixty-one points, and can count only somewhere between thirty-one and sixty, then he only pays the penalty, but if he makes only thirty, he is Schneider—the translation of which is "cut"—and if he makes no count at all, he is Schwartz, or "black," which is equivalent to our whitewashed, or the less polite term of "skunked." There are increased penalties for both these unfortunate conditions, as when Whist used to be played when a Double or Triple was lost.

MATADORS.

The possession of the Knaves also add to the value of the hands. Remembering their succession, the Knave of clubs standing first, what are called "Matadors" begins by possessing this particular Knave. A hand having Knave of clubs and Knave of spades, has two Matadors. If the player holds the Knaves of clubs, spades, and hearts, always bearing the succession of suits in hand, he has three Matadors. If he holds them all he has four. But there is more than this. If with the four Knaves he has Ace, King, Queen and Ten, these cards increase the number of his Matadors, so that a hand holding all the Knaves and all the other trumps, would have not less than eleven Matodors in hand. But the absence of the leading

Knave, the one in clubs, prevents the having of Matadors at all. If the best Knave is found in the Skat, of course it belongs to the party who takes it up, and so with two or three Knaves, picking up the missing one in the Skat would make them all Matadors.

Their absence in a player's hand, if he wins his call, his adversaries holding them, makes the Matadors count in his favor. If he loses, and holds Matadors, the having of them increases the penalty. The having, or not having Matadors, by the caller or his opponents, is an important factor, of what a player receives or has to pay out. At the conclusion may be found the full tables of games devised from the rules laid down by the recent Skat Congress held at Altenberg.

PROGRESSION OF THE GAME.

The term Tourné is derived from the French, and means to turn a card, and to play Tourné is to make a bid higher than the Simple game. Solo is higher than Tourné, and Nullo a better call than Solo, and beats a Solo in spades, but Solo in clubs is higher than Nullo. There is no use in asserting that this is an unphilosophical sequence. We have to take the game as it is played. It is the cost of the game in this instance that governs.

Grando comes after a Solo in clubs, then Nullo-

Open. A Grando with, or without Knaves, is the highest call that can be made.

FROM THE LOWEST TO THE HIGHEST GAME.

The game of Skat begins with the lowest call, which is the Simple game, and ends with a Grando with, or without two or more Knaves, which is the highest.

In a tabulated form the games may be seen as follows:

Simple game in Diamonds

" " Hearts

" " Spades

" " Clubs

Tourné "Diamonds

" Hearts

" Spades

" Clubs

Solo "Diamonds

" Hearts

" Spades

Nullo

Solo "Clubs

Nullo-open.

Grando, with or without two or more Jacks.

We do not give the cost of these games here, as we think it would be confusing; but the philosophy of the values will be explained hereafter. By referring to the table of values (page 31) like in Boston, at once the cost of any game can be determined.

WHAT IS TOURNÉ?

The Simple game having been explained, Tourné is played precisely like the Simple game, only the trump is made by the player taking up one of the cards from the Skat, which one card he turns face up on the table. Whatever it is, that is trumps. The person making Tourné the game, may take up either of the two cards he pleases, so that he exposes only one of them; but he must do so before looking at either of them. Of the two cards he may select either the top or the bottom one, but before looking at them. That card shown is the trump. He must make sixty-one points, or lose. It is played just like the Simple game. The player incorporates the two cards of the Skat into his hand, and discards two. Whatever is in the Skat, or in his discard, belongs to him.

WHAT IS SOLO?

The player calling Solo declares the trump, and by so doing, he tacitly asserts that he can make his sixtyone points without having recourse to the aid the Skat might give him. He says a Solo in diamonds, hearts, spades or clubs, whatever he thinks he is strongest in. Though he does not look at the Skat until the game is over, the Skat belongs to him, and any points found there are to his credit. After the ten cards are played in each hand, then only he looks at his Skat.

NULLO.

The player who calls Nullo declares that he will take no trick. There are no trumps here, and the Knaves fall into the usual order of cards, the Ace being highest, then King, Queen, Knave, Ten, Nine, Eight and Seven. If the Nullo player takes a trick he loses. The Skat belongs to him.

NULLO OUVERT OR OPEN

Is a Nullo or a call to make no trick at all, the player exposing all his cards, laying them on the table. It is precisely like "Misery on the table" in Boston. He must take no trick. The Skat is not used.

GRANDO.

This is a declare where the player dispenses with the Skat, as in Solo, and depends on the natural strength of his cards. When the call of Grando is made the player must count his sixty-one. Failing to do this he loses. The four Knaves are the highest trumps, and the only trumps. Aces and Tens of suits are the highest cards, then Kings, Queens, Nines, Eights, as in the other game

RECAPITULATION.

Simple Game.—The player declares a trump, and has the privilege of taking the Skat, and has to make sixty-one points.

Tourné.—The player turns up one of the cards in the Skat, and that card the trump. He must make sixty-one points.

Solo.—Without the Skat the player declares a trump, and must make sixty-one points. He counts the points which may exist in the Skat after the game is closed.

Nullo.—There are no trumps. The Skat is not used. The player must make no tricks. The highest card is the Ace, next King, then Queen, Knave, Ten, Nine, Eight, Seven.

Nullo-Open.—The same as above, only the player exposes his cards.

Grando.—Without the use of the Skat, the four Knaves in their color succession, clubs, spades, hearts and diamonds, being the highest cards, then the Aces and Tens of various suits the next, then the Kings,

Queens, Nines, Eights, Sevens the next, the player must make sixty-one points.

SCHNEIDER AND SCHWARTZ.

A declaration is made in the Simple game, Tourné or Solo. The player who calls it, if he has thirty points or less, loses with "Schneider." He ought to have made sixty-one. The opponents have made then of course ninety, and there is an increased penalty. The rule works both ways. If no points are made at all by the player he is Schwartz, or "black." The same thing happens to the opponents. A player with a strong hand, believing he can make his opponents Schneider, can announce that he is going to make his adversaries "Schneider." In that case, because he announces it there are increased penalties. This is called announcing "Schneider." He can announce, also, that he can make his adversaries "Schwartz."

PLAYS .-- ADVANCING THEM AFTER A FIRST DECLARATION.

If in Tourné a Jack be turned up, it may as a fortunate accident, give very much greater strength to a hand, and the player may call Grando Tourné, which is Grando, and is paid as such.

GRANDO WITH THE KNAVES.

Sometimes a player who has been bid up to the highest notch by a Nullo Ouvert—or a Nullo-Open—

will declare Grando without two Matadors, which means that he may hold the Knave of spades and Knave of hearts, or the Knave of spades and diamond. He may win every point, but looking in his Skat he finds there the Knave of clubs. The Knave is his, to his misfortune. He has declared Grando "without two Knaves," but he has found the Knave he does not want, which, he hoped, was in his adversaries hands, in his own Skat, and he loses.

WHEN THERE IS NO CALL, RAMPS.

It sometimes happens that no call is made by the Skat players. In such a case the cards might be thrown down, and new game commenced. By prior arrangement, Ramsch—or Ramps—may be introduced. The three play without recourse to the Skat, and the party taking the most points pays the other players. The four Knaves alone are trumps, and the Aces and Tens, as in Grando, are the highest cards after the Knaves. The person having the most points pays ten to the other players. If two have the same number of points they each pay ten to the person who has the least. If each player has forty points it is a stand off. The Altenberg Skat Congress urges the abandonment of Ramps.

TO LAY DOWN.

In the Tourné, where it is luck alone which determines the trump, a card may be turned up, which is the only trump the player has. He is certain to lose. If he played he might be made Schneider or Schwartz. In order to save time he may, after the first card is played, at once declare that he cannot make the sixty-one points, and throw up the hand. He pays the smallest penalty the hand calls for. The opponents cannot give up their hands under any circumstances, though they may be certain of defeat.

TO CALL A GAME.

There can be no retrogression. A call cannot go backwards to one of a lesser value. If a call be made in hearts, and driven to spades, the player may call it in clubs; this refers to Solo. In Tourné the turn up regulates the trump, unless a Knave is turned, then the player may call Tourné Grando.

THE PHILOSOPHY OF THE COUNT.

Simple games—Diamonds Cost	1
—Hearts	2
—Spades	3
—Clubs	4

Tourné—Diamonds 5
—Hearts 6
—Spades 7
—Clubs 8
Solo—Diamonds 9
—Hearts10
—Spades11
Nullo
Clubs12
Grando16
Nullo-Open

The way of counting the penalties is increased or diminished with the Matadors held by the player or by his adversaries, or whether there be Schneider or Schwartz made by either the player or his opponents. When Schneider is announced two rates are given. When Schwartz is announced there are four rates. These rates are multiplied by the fixed values made out for the calls. The Matadors being the most changeable of the factors, beginning with one Matador and concluding with eleven, the valuations of game in a tabular form will be found convenient, and such is presented for every possible combination of the game on page 31

HINTS AS TO THE PROPER PLAYING OF SKAT.

The four-handed game with the thirty-two cards, as in Euchre, is well-known. In Skat, which is a three-handed game, the change is somewhat confusing, and added to this are certain combinations, the presence of the Knaves, which are the best trumps. The two cards in the Skat, the Skat being a constant factor, also increases the difficulties.

To play Skat well is an accomplishment which very few possess.

The suits which happen to be short in the person's hand who makes a call are often a matter of surprise. The player of a call has the advantage of making a short suit, by his discard in the Skat. It is his object to have a short suit, so that he can trump the Aces or Tens, or other high cards of his adversaries.

To get the caller between the two opponents is what his adversaries must always endeavor to accomplish. It can be seen at once that if the caller of a game is short of a suit, he must trump, otherwise, with their long suit, the adversaries being on both sides of him, will put in all their Aces and Tens, and thus fatten their own points. To prevent this the person who has made the call, is forced to trump, and to trump may weaken his hand.

Strict count must be kept at all stages of the game,

and the caller and his adversaries must know exactly what are the totals in the tricks taken. A good Skat player, when a round is over, always announces the exact number of points he has. In this counting, the player having the Skat, if it has been incorporated in his hand, knows more than his opponents. After four or five plays, good players will be pretty well satisfied as to what is, or what ought to be in the Skat. This knowledged of the points, in every stage of the game, is of use in this way. A player of a call has already scored fifty (50) points, the adversaries have the same numbers. An Ace then, which wins or loses, decides the fate of a game. Even a Knave may make exactly sixty-one. In the same way when a Schneider is possible, and eighty has been made, a Ten or an Ace put in at the right time ends the matter.

Skat is a game which can only be played well after many sittings. The idiosyncracies of various players becomes more prominent in Skat than in any other game. Some are very bold, while other are over timid. It is the element of chance which always predominates.

ADVICE.

We should advise those, who wish to learn the game, to first acquire a knowledge of the Simple game. By playing a half-dozen rounds the Simple

game can be readily learnt. After that Tourné and Solo ought to present no difficulties, and then Grando, which has the same basis, will be understood. After all, Nullo and Nullo Ouvert, are the only real exceptions.

TABLE OF VALUES.

Life is too short for the Skat player, at least for the American, to count up and figure what are the results.

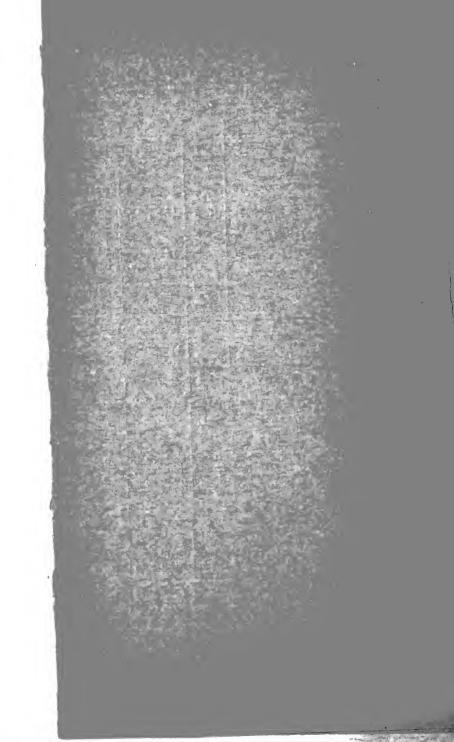
In the game of Boston, players have a printed card, on which the penalties are indicated. The one found at the conclusion of this brochure is taken from that in use by the Altenberg Skat Congress, to which august body we acknowledge our indebtedness.

It should be remembered that in some parts of Germany the Simple game is rarely played, and that Tournê is the first game announced. Nevertheless we urge on all players to try the Simple game, as it is the abc of Skat.

			_			
		So	lo.			To
	Clubs.	Spades.	Hearts.	Diamonds.	Grando.	Clubs.
	12	11	10	9	12	œ
	120	110	100	90		
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